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ABSTRACT

The paper provides guidelines to rural school districts developing community support and resources for their gifted education programs. The following seven questions are addressed: (1) Does your gifted/talented program and community need a formal community resource development team? (2) If so, how should it be developed? (3) How can you get other programs, within and without the school, involved? (4) What kinds of things, funding sources, places, people, can you expect to solicit for students, teachers, and parents within the community? (5) Who, how, and when should you solicit materials, funds, etc? (6) What kinds of resources should you recruit outside of the community? (7) What kinds of processes should a resource developer deal with? Tables list: "thing" resources within the community, places within and around the community, roles people play and people resources, funding sources and activities, resources outside of the community, ways to get publicity, and volunteer programs. (DB)

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Developing Community Resources To Support Rural Gifted Programs

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Introduction

Every gifted program could benefit from some kinds of community support. However, not every gifted program needs to have a fifty person committee committed to the development of community resources. But some do! In this paper the following questions will be examined:

1) Does your G/T program/community need a formal community resource development team?
2) If you said yes to 1), how should it be developed?
3) How can you get other programs, within and without the school involved? (collaborators)
4) What kinds of things, funding sources, places, people, can you expect to solicit for kids, teachers and parents within the community?
5) Who should you solicit and how when you want (materials, funds, etc.)?
6) What kinds of resources should you recruit outside of the community?
7) What kinds of processes should a resource developer deal with?

The Formal Resource Development Decision

Rural school districts may be very different from each other (see Helge, 1984). Because of this different districts will make different investments in gifted resources. Districts are rural for any of the following reasons: 1) they don't have a town; 2) they have a town but the town is small; 3) they are small in numbers and not close to a large town or city; 4) they are remote from anything else (here the town may be fairly good size and still be called rural); 5) they are rural and isolated in the sense that it is hard to get to them.

Many rural teachers know everyone in their school district, what they do, their hobbies and whether or not they like kids. This teacher does not need a formal resource committee nor does (s)he need anyone to solicit resources for the classroom. However, this teacher is in the minority even in small rural schools. When the town size or the district contains more than a thousand or so people the likelihood is high that a single teacher will not know all that should be known about who has or can do what.

Formal resource development programs should be considered when the gifted teacher 1) does not know all of the people in the district who might work with or support the G/T programs; 2) does not know all of the places, events, resources, etc. which might be available to students in the gifted program; 3) does not know what other groups are collecting resources and how some of these might be made available to the gifted program' 4) does not know from whom funds might be raised for the program or 5) the various processes by which resources are recruited or acquired. This leads me to say that G/T teachers in almost all areas should consider the development of a formalized resource acquisition procedure.

Developing a Community Resource Committee

In this section the committee described is large for a rural district. The assumption here is that you may be in the county seat which might have a population of twenty or more thousand people. If your district is much smaller, then obviously the committee will be smaller and each person will handle multiple functions.

The first thing to do is to form an executive committee. That is, get people who are interested in supporting the G/T program together, ones who will work. Explain the needs as you perceive them and brainstorm other needs. You should try to have members who represent all aspects of the community including the parents of gifted children and the children themselves. Develop, on the basis of the needs, a rationale statement and a set of goals. These should be written so that you can use them for later publicity. If you are being very formal develop by laws and a charter (necessary for tax exempt status if you are not affiliated with the public schools). Set the formal, not working, meeting schedule about two years in advance so you can get all your power people (the mayor, the bank president, etc.) to come. These are the people whose names you want on your letterhead. The working part of the group will meet more often. They should develop subcommittees in the areas of: (1) publicity, (2) parent liaison, (3) school liaison, (4) fund raising, (5) people acquisition, (6) thing acquisition, (7) site location and (8) evaluation among others depending on your goals and objectives. The critical question at the outset deals with who controls the committee. Some prefer school control because they certify students, confer tax excempt status, provide insurance, and so forth. Others prefer extra-school control to develop Saturday programs, mentorships, to access correspondence courses, and so on; things which the schools might or might not approve.

It is obvious that in a very small district that most of the above would be done by the G/T teacher supported by his/her students. Involving the students in resource acquisition is very important. First the resources are for them. Secondly, many will give to a child when they wouldn't give to an adult. Thirdly, the teacher can do only so much on his/her own.

Getting Others Involved - Collaboration

One of the first things to think about is whether or not G/T education should do it on its own. There are many programs within the school each of which has needs that are not satisfied. Do you need a schoolwide resource network and if you do this will G/T be appropriately represented? Can you collaborate across campuses, e.g., elementary with secondary schools?

Are there other groups with similar needs or who address similar publics where they will or could share a combined message. For example, are other agencies collecting funds (United Way), supplies (churches), work sites (Job Training Partners Act), and so forth. Are there other support groups such as those for handicapped students (Council for Exceptional Children), for parents or teachers (PTA) who might work with you.

When you involve others you have more people to help you and therefore more access to resources (Hutton, 1980). On the other hand what you receive is to be shared among more than one group. If others are already soliciting resources it is probably best politically to join forces rather than to duplicate effort.

Kind of Resources: Within the Community

There are many ways in which a break down of resources could be categorized (McClure, Cook & Thompson, 1977). We will use things, places, people, funding resources, etc. For each of these areas a brief description will be provided and a list of possible suggestions will be shown. It should be remembered that no single community will produce all of these.

Things

Things include almost everything except people and money. Table 1 lists a variety of things which could be used to support G/T programs.

Insert Table 1 About Here

As is indicated in the Table there are resources which could be sold which are donated to the program. These can be either new or used resources. Other resources are junk to the person who has them but are valuable in the classroom. For example, a printer may routinely throw card stock, tag board and other scraps away, following a printing order; which are large enough to be used by children.

There are many things which can be found in the print and audio-visual areas which support independent study projects or teacher controlled presentations. These can be found in the free film and the free print materials guides. There are things that can be loaned such as books and other materials from home libraries (assuming you have a list), antiques, collections, and so forth. There are facilities which can be borrowed, such as a conference room at a bank for a special meeting or a work station owned by a local laboratory at which a student can do chemistry experiments.

Places

Within any community there are many places which can be used to support the education of gifted children. Some of these places can be explored, see McLure, et al. (1977) for a detailed description. In other places you may see artifacts, processes, events, examine natural resources or have an internship or externship. Table 2 provides a list of some possible ideas.

Insert Table 2 About Here

To arrange to use a place in the community, Dettmer (1983) suggests that you first write a letter to the business. Then follow this up with an interview. Set up during the interview, the what, when & where of the facility use. This should be followed by a follow up letter and finally after the facility has been used, a nice commendation letter to the owner/manager. This is the formal process which should be followed if you don't know the owner of the facility. If the owner is well known less formal procedures could be used. However at least one letter before you arrive is helpful to ensure that you are remembered (by the person whose facility you are going to

use) and another as a follow up to state how pleased you are that you could use the facility.

You should also keep a list for yourself of these places and what your (and your student's) responses to the visit was. Did you like it? What was especially informative? See McClure et al. (1977) for a record keeping format.

People

People are needed to support the gifted program in a variety of ways. People volunteer to work with children in and out of school. Others volunteer to support teachers but not to work directly with children. Your community may already have a volunteer bureau, in which case you can just plug into their network. Or you may want to help establish such a bureau. Table 3 lists a variety of roles that people may play in support of your gifted program and some sources from which they may be recruited. People are the

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Insert Table 3 About Here

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heart of any program. You may have all of the resources in the world but if you do not have the people to implement them, then the children are unlikely to learn. Gifted children in rural settings need role models and support when working with these models. People collection is described by Saccomandi (1983), Ilsley (1981), & Harris (1985).

Funding Sources

Every program needs money for supplies, books, field trips, etc. There are as many funding sources as there are pockets in the country. Table 4

Insert Table 4 About Here

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lists a number of funding sources and activities which have been used to raise money to support programs in the past. Some of these will be appropriate for your rural community. Others will not be applicable or will not be appropriate within your rural culture. For discussions of detailed fund raising procedures see Gurin (1981), Brakeley (1980), Johnson (1982), Fleishman (1983), Flanagan (1981, 1983).

Events

In almost every district or community there are events or activities in which gifted students should participate or to which gifted students should go. You should look at the tours that are available that tourists take. Most students do not take advantage of these tours. You should also maintain a calender of events of what is going to regularly happen in your community and in your area. To do this get on the mailing lists of all groups who might do things of interest for your students. All events are possible bases for studies, projects, etc. for gifted students.

You should also look at community and area events with an eye to piggy backing on them to get publicity, to raise money, and to get volunteers. For example, can you and your students run a booth at the county fair to earn money? During the book fair can the gifted students get the local book store to bring reference books or advanced text books that the students would like to have and solicit parents to buy them and donate them to the G/T program. Can you recruit a mentor for a gifted boy who wants to be an automotive engineer at the local Hot Rod club meeting? All of these things are possible and illustrative of what can be done at events.

Resourcing Outside of the Home Community

In addition to resources in the local community there are others who will provide you with valuable information, materials, money, etc. Some of these resources can be used for direct instruction, others support instruction or independent study, others deal with activities or places which are advantageous or supportive of gifted students. Table 5 lists some of these

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Insert Table 5 About Here

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alternatives. When looking at resources outside of the community you need to be realistic. Most artistically gifted students should see the Lourve in Paris but the likelihood that they will is low. However a video tape tour may be available, see Kearney (1981), Plese (1982), & Smallwood (1986).

Processes or Activities of a Resource Committee

There are many things that a G/T resource committee or resource group could provide to benefit the education of gifted children. Only some of these are listed below. If you have a need you or your committee should try to satisfy it. On the other hand, there are many things listed here, only some of which are fully described, which would overtax a small resource group. You should plan on starting small and building up rather than trying to do too much in the beginning and overloading yourself. Some of the processes that you may wish to develop are listed and examined below.

Publicity

When you want people to give of their time and money you have to let them know what you want of them. This is done through publicity in a variety of forms. There is publicity that is primarily institutional in the sense that what you are trying to do is to keep your committee or program name in the minds of the audience. There is momentary publicity, this is like a story in the newspaper which describes something that you have been doing, or a drive you are contemplating, or a thing that you need. Then there is publicity that is specifically directed at the acquisition of a specific resource. Table 7 lists many ways by which you can get your program spotlighted. Each of the

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Insert Table 6 About Here

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methods of publicity is fairly detailed and there are a multitude of books and articles on how to do them. Some of these are listed in the bibliography, e.g., Flanagan (1981), Plese (1982), Clay & Pietz (1977), Pool (1975), McClure, et al. (1977).

Insurance

Every group needs insurance to protect its members in case of accident or malfeasance. If your group is housed in a school facility you need only to worry about insurance for transportation. If your group is not sponsored and controlled by the school you also need general liability and personal injury insurance. The latter two kinds of insurance protect you if someone is hurt on your premises or if you provide a product which is defective. This insurance should always be provided even if everyone is very good friends. Remember the next of kin may think differently. Transportation insurance is the kind that usually causes the greatest problem. If volunteers are to drive children from one location to another then they must be insured. This can be done by having blanket coverage on all drivers (say $50,000 deductible) in a catastrophic mode or releases from the parents and a requirement that you check each individual's insurance policy.

Recognition Procedures

In large communities there is always a dinner or banquet to which all volunteers, doners, big wigs, etc. should be invited. At this banquet their contributions are extolled and generally they are recognized. In small communities resources groups usually piggy back with other groups for their banquet if one is given. But whether or not a banquet is held, recognition is important if people are to volunteer a second time, Vineyard (1981), Kozol & Ulmer (1972).

Several techniques have been used successfully to reward people who have contributed time or money or things. For people in business a newspaper article in the local paper recognizes them and hopefully, gives their business a boost. Volunteers like pictures in the paper and in school year books. Plaques, for time given, make a permanent remembrance for volunteers. A large donor/volunteer plaque in the foyer of a school makes a permanent record of those who have contributed. Some schools give printed certificates.

As part of the program you should keep a scrap book for articles, photos, etc. Having one's picture in the book, time after time, is all the reward many volunteers need. This is particularly true for those who work with children and have their pictures taken with them.

Resources Hotline

Another process that will be beneficial is the development of a resources hotline. This telephone line is manned at certain hours each week. The volunteer who mans it can describe what is needed or is being sought during the year or the items for the week. (S)He can also accept unsolicited contributions. People can be told to call (use a brochure or table tent PR system) and the volunteers will answer them. The phone can either be in the school, the committee office, or in the home of a volunteer.

Volunteer Programs

There are really two kinds of volunteer programs: 1) those which provide direct services for children and 2) those which provide indirect services to children. Table 7 lists a number of programs of each kind. There are a

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Insert Table 7 About here

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number of sources which describe ways in which volunteer programs can be organized and maintained, for example Flanagan (1981), Kozoll & Ulmer (1972), & Taranto (1983).

Summary

Most gifted programs would benefit by having a resource support committee. This committee should be designed to have the proper persons from the community on its board as well as an executive working group which is actually in charge which directs publicity, parent and school liaison, fund raising, people/place/thing acquisition and finally it would provide site location and evaluation.

The primary emphasis is on people. The people who are recruited will be the ones who do the work, gather the materials and run the show. Resources within the community are categorized as things, places, people, funding sources and events. Each of these are described as well as resources outside of the community and a variety of processes that a resource committee might use in resource acquisition. These processes include publicity, insurance acquisition, recognition procedures, resources hot lines and volunteer programs.

Table 1

Thing Resources Within the Community

For parents:
- a library of books and readings on education of the gifted and talented (kept at the local library)
- books on gifted available from people in the community

For kids (and sometimes teachers):

Consumable items which are salable
- paint (hardware store donation)
- paper (local supply store)
- office supplies (business or office supply store donation)
- chemicals (lab or pharmacy donation)
- materials for student projects/experiments

Nonconsumable materials
- furniture (remains of garage sale)
- computer (business donates outmoded model)
- books (community book drive)
- things to take apart (remains of garage sale)

Junk materials
- construction materials (builders' scraps)
- carpet scraps (carpet store remnants and samples)
- printers clippings (cut off ends from printing projects)
- pickle buckets (any fast food place)

Reference materials
- books from home libraries
- books from reference libraries
- books from local, state, federal agencies

Things that people will loan to the school/kids
- antiques
- curios
- souvenirs
- pictures
- collections
- exhibits

Facilities
- meeting room, for a convocation (local motel or restuarant)
- bank computer room (for data entry and analysis)
- a garage (to build an OM vehicle)
- a parking lot (to hold a car wash)

Audio visual materials
- video tapes (any subject)
- films (any subject) borrow from community members or from video/film libraries

Table 2

Places Within and Around the Community

Career exploration sites
- doctor's office
- farm
- store
- bank

Historical site
- monument
- museum
- artifact collection
- battle sites

See a process
- dairy - cheese production
- cannery - tuna canning
- electronics assembler - make a radio
- outboard motor factory - make a motor
- newspaper-printing

See an event
- tractor pull
- community theatre
- log rolling contest
- rattle snake roundup

Internship/externship site
- with a veterinarian
- with a lawyer
- with a forest ranger
- with a marine biologist

Natural Resources (for independent study)
- forest
- wildlife
- land forms
- water

Table 3

Roles People Play and People Sources

Roles
- driver
  -- bus: to take a large group somewhere
  -- auto: to take a few to an event or place
  -- hay wagon: for a fund raiser
- speakers
  -- for convocations
  -- gifted seminars (for teachers or parents)
  -- for topics of interest
- mentors
- graders -- to free up regular teachers to work with gifted children
- aides
  -- to work with individual children
  -- to work with groups of children
  -- to work on projects (materials/exhibits/curriculum development)
  -- to do typing/filing, etc., to give the teacher more interaction time with kids
- tutors
  -- to work in accelerated areas
  -- to assist in areas missed when the children are at a pullout program
  -- substitute teachers -- to cover classes for regular teachers so they can work with kids or go to staff development
- teachers
  -- special course
  -- Saturday programs
  -- summer programs
- other volunteers

Sources
- middle aged women
- business men
- service clubs (junior league)
- clubs for the retired (AARP)
- religious groups
- yuppies
- retired people
- minority or ethnic club/group members (NAACP)
- student group from a college
- retired teachers
- unemployed workers
- PTA members
- parents
- grandparents

Table 4

Funding Sources and Activities

Sources
- local clubs
  -- service clubs (be a project)
  -- fraternal group organizations
  -- ethnic group organizations
  -- social clubs
  -- occupational clubs
- local businesses
  -- merchants
  -- unions
  -- farmers
- other local groups
  -- religious groups
  -- service agencies
- local individuals
- agencies
  -- local
  -- state
  -- federal
- bequests/grants (for granting see, the grantsmanship center news)
  -- foundations (Foundation Directory, 1981)
  -- charitable trusts
  -- wills and bequests

Activities
- membership drives (pay dues)
- bet on when a car parked on lake ice will fall through
- Las Vegas nite
- regional ad/coupon book
- pot luck supper
- bake sales
- bazaars
- white elephant sales
- garage sales/auctions/rummage sale
- raffles
- start a business
- cake walk
- fox hunt
- hayride
- dance
- box supper
- tie in sale (10% of all Sonic sales on Wednesday donated to the program)
- ribbon sales (poms poms made of ribbon embossed with school name mascot)
- sale merchandise
  -- turkey
  -- fertilizer
  -- candy, etc.
- mouse roulette (mice are trained to race in a roulette wheel)

Table 5

Resources Outside of the Community

For teachers or teaching (Smallwood, 1986; Wurman, 1972)
- films/filmstrips (free catalogs available in public library)
- print materials (free catalogs of material available from associations and manufacturers in library)
- books (from a variety of bookstores and discount publishers)
- libraries (at a university or large city)
- government agencies (through the US Printing Office)
- radio (state and national educational radio as well as NPR)
- microcomputer with modem
  -- instructional materials from other cities
  -- data base access
- telephone bridge (groups of kids can interact at a distance)
- satellite downlink (receive instructional video)
- line of sight TV (microwave relay transmission between multiple sites)
- videotape exchange (share resources through one-on-one exchange or through a regional cooperative)
- state department in your state
  -- education department (educational materials)
  -- agriculture department (print and AV materials)
  -- department of transportation (print and AV materials)

Resources for children
- bookmobile
- summer G/T programs in the state
- weekend G/T programs (contact colleges in your area)
- scholarships
- correspondence courses

Table 6

Ways to Get Publicity

Radio
- free public service spots
- talk show
- weekly swap or sale show

Television (usually cable)
- public service spot
- community service cable channel
- video tape

Newspaper
- feature story
- education news
- ads (we will take leftovers from your garage sale)
- letters to the editor

Billboards
- teaser campaign (who is John Galt?--For weeks before the campaign starts)
- donated space while waiting for a customer (the kids create the sign)
- on the school marquee

Newsletter
- section in the school paper
- a separate distributed to all kids
- mail it to all homes in the district
- leave at public library counter

Presentations to groups
- service clubs
- Chamber of Commerce
- Grange
- Lions, etc.

Static displays
- posters
- bumper stickers
- flyers
- tee shirts
- window displays
- bank signs
- table tents
- bulletin boards (in libraries, banks, churches, etc.)

Contests
- lottery
- find that resource (treasure hunt)

Get a sports team to sponsor your group

Telephone campaign (call everyone in town)

Direct mail
- piggy back on a local mailing, e.g., from the Chamber of Commerce
- utility mail outs, e.g., in REA bills, piggy back
- back to school mailing, piggy back

Book marks (leave them at library, should say who you are and what you want on them)

Booth at the county fair

Movie trailers at the local movie theatre

Regional advertiser or shopper
Story/AD in school rule book
Send a flyer home with the students
Brochure to pass out
School Newspaper article
Open house
Industrial concerns questionnaire
Business tour questionnaire

Table 7

Volunteer Programs

Direct Service Programs
- substitute teachers
- mentors
- summer program instructor
- Saturday program instructor
- small group instructor/guide
- tutor
- internship/externship mentor

Indirect service program
- drivers for private vehicles
- drivers for school buses
- paper graders
- secretarial support
- resource collector

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